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## **Are You Ready for Christmas?**

*ReadyWisconsin has simple tips to keep the holiday safe*

(MADISON) – The joys of the holidays are all around us, but so are the dangers. An average of six deaths and more than 20 injuries occur annually as a result of home fires started from Christmas trees, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). By taking a little TLC...Tree, Lights and Candle Safety...you can help ensure a safe and happy holiday season for your family.

### **"T" is for Tree:**

#### **Selecting a Tree for the Holiday**

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground – if many needles fall off, the tree has probably dried out and is a fire hazard.

#### **Caring for Your Tree**

Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

#### **Disposing of Your Tree**

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood-burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

#### **Artificial Christmas Trees**

If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

### **"L" is for Lights:**

#### **Maintain Your Holiday Lights**

Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.

#### **Do Not Overload Electrical Outlets**

Do not link more than three light strands unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires – they should not be warm to the touch. Do not leave holiday lights on unattended.

#### **Use Only Nonflammable Decorations**

All decorations should be nonflammable or flame retardant and placed away from heat vents.

### **C is for Candle:**

#### **Avoid Using Lit Candles**

Candle use increases the incidence of holiday fires. If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning. Keep candles at a height where children and pets cannot reach them. Consider using flameless candles that provide the appearance and glow of a candle but are safely battery operated.

**Never Put Lit Candles on a Tree**

Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame – candles, lighters or matches.

Finally, as in every season, have working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home, test them monthly and keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times. Know when and how to call for help, and remember to practice your home escape plan.

ReadyWisconsin is a campaign from Wisconsin Emergency Management with a mission to prepare individuals, families and businesses for emergencies and disasters. For additional winter safety tips, visit <http://ReadyWisconsin.wi.gov> or follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin](http://www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin)) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/ReadyWisconsin](http://www.twitter.com/ReadyWisconsin)).

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